

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12

AID-20 COME-00 EB-11 FRB-02 TRSE-00 XMB-07 OPIC-12

CIEP-02 LAB-06 SIL-01 OMB-01 AGR-20 IGA-02 ORM-03

SR-02 SCA-01 IO-12 RSR-01 /182 W

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R 251315 Z APR 73

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3977

INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

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E. O. 11652: N/ A

TAGS: PINS PINT EAGR IN

SUBJECT: MINOR FOOD RIOTS IN MAHARASHTRA

REF: (A) NEW DELHI 4726

(B) BOMBAY 842 (NOTAL)

(C) BOMBAY 856 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: NAGPUR REPORTED BACK TO NORMAL BUT MINOR DISTURBANCES ELSEWHERE MAY PRESAGE FURTHER OUTBREAKS. GOI RUSHING NEWLY-PROCURED FOODGRAINS TO MAHARASHTRA. IN PARLIAMENT, OPPOSITION AND CONGRESS ARE BLAMING EACH OTHER FOR RIOTS. PRESS CRITICISM IS INCREASING. END SUMMARY

1. NAGPUR IS REPORTED NORMAL AFTER RESUMPTION OF GRAIN SALES TO RATION CARD- HOLDERS. YARN SHORTAGE DUE POWER CUTS HAD THROWN MANY

NAGPUR HANDLOOM WEAVERS OUT OF WORK, CONTRIBUTING TO TENSION. RIOTING

SPREAD TO SINNER (NASIK), WHERE POLICE REPORTEDLY FIRED ON DEMON

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STRATORS APR 22, KILLING FIVE AND WOUNDING 25, SINNAR RIOT WAS FOLLOWED BY STRIKE APR 23. GRAIN DISTRIBUTION TO RETAILS SHOPS IS REPORTEDLY SUSPENDED IN ONE DROUGH- HIT DISTRICT AND ERRATIC IN OTHERS INCLUDING BOMBAY. BOMBAY SOURCES PREDICT FURTHER RIOTS UNLESS GOI IMPROVES FOOD DISTRIBUTION FASTER THAN CONGEN BOMBAY BELIEVES POSSIBLE.

2. AS GRAIN PROCUREMENT IN PUNJAB/ HARYANA AND CRITICISM OF CENTER IN BOMBAY (INCLUDING FROM CHIEF MINISTER NALK) INCREASED, GOI BEGAN SENDING 150,000 TONS FOODGRAINS TO MAHARASHTRA IN " WHEAT SPECIALS". TWELVE TRAINS ARE SCHEDULED TO MAKE RUN THIS WEEK, CARRYING ALMOST ALL WHEAT THUS FAR PROCURED BY GOVERNMENT.

3. CABINET ECONOMIC POLICY COMMITTEE MET TWICE APRIL 23 TO CONSIDER ALTERNATIVES AIMED AT ENCOURAGING PROCUREMENT AND BROADENING DISTRIBUTION. NO DECISIONS ANNOUNCED YET, BUT APRIL 25 " TIMES OF INDIA" STORY ALLEGES THAT FURTHER GRAIN IMPORTS WERE DISCUSSED " AT HIGHEST LEVEL".

4. PARLIAMENT DEBATED " CALLING ATTENTION" MOTION ON RIOTS AND FOOD- GRAIN PROCURMENT/ DISTRIBUTION APRIL 24. OPPOSITION CHARGED " BULLETS CHEAPER THAN WHEAT" AND, DEPENDING ON IDEOLOGICAL BIAS, ARGUED GRAIN TRADE TAKEOVER HAD FAILED OR HAD NOT GONE FAR ENOUGH. GOVERNMENT MINISTER OF STATE FOR AGRIC SHINDE OF MAHASHTRA REPLIED IT WAS SYMPATHETIC WITH SLAIN, WHO HAD BEEN INDUCED TO RIOT IN PART BY DISGRUNTLED GRAIN DEALERS AND OPPOSITION PARTIES: GOI WAS RUSHING SUPPLIES; AND EVERY EFFORT WOULD BE MADE DURING " CRITICAL" 2-3 WEEKS AHEAD TO BROADEN DISTRIBUTION. HE WAS CONFIDENT SITUATION WOULD GREATLY IMPROVE THEREAFTER. NO CHANGES IN POLICY (E. G., HIGHER PROCUREMENT PRICES, TOUGH ACTION AGAINST HOARDERS) ANNOUNCED.

5. " TIMES OF INDIA" CALLED RIOTS " WORST POSSIBLE ADVERTISEMENT" FOR TAKEOVER; BOMBAY SISTER PUBLICATION " ECONOMIC TIMES" SAID TAKEOVER HAD " FAILED." PRO- GOVERNMENT " NATIONAL HERALD" ON APRIL 24 DECRIED " SABOTAGE ON FOOD FROM" BY TRADERS AND OPPOSITION. ON APRIL 25, " NATIONAL HERALD" REVERSED ITS FIELD, SAID GOI AND ESPECIALLY MAHARASHTRA GOVERNMENT SHOULD STRENGTHEN DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM , NOT SEEK SCAPEGOATS. " INDIAN EXPRESS" AND " STATESMAN" APRIL 25 ALSO URGED GRAIN DISTRIBUTION BE IMPROVED LEST FURTHER RIOTS BREAK OUT. SHINDE WAS CRITICIZED FOR UNFOUNDED OPTIMISM.

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